



News Release from Congressman

ROB SIMMONS

SECOND DISTRICT, CONNECTICUT

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SIMMONS WINS ONE FOR VETERANS

At Simmons' Urging, VA Relents and Announces Free Credit Monitoring

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congressman Rob Simmons, R-2nd District, today announced that the U.S. Dept. Veterans Affairs (VA) has agreed to provide free credit monitoring for those veterans affected by the May 3 theft of electronic data. Simmons is the co-author of legislation that would require the VA to provide free credit reports and credit monitoring.

"It's about time," Simmons said. "Today's news means millions of veterans will now receive free credit monitoring from the government in an effort to protect against identity theft stemming from the May 3 incident."

According to the VA, those veterans who have already received warning letters from the department will need to contact the VA to receive the service. Veterans can also contact Rep. Simmons' Norwich district office at 860-886-0139 for assistance.

In May, Simmons joined Rep. Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) and introduced H.R. 5464, the "Veterans' Identity Protection Act of 2006." H.R. 5464 would require the VA to:

- Provide a free credit report every three months over a one year time frame to every veteran whose personal data was compromised;
- Provide one year of free credit monitoring to every veteran whose personal data was compromised;
- Implement by Jan. 2007 the recommendations made by the Inspector General of Veterans Affairs in their March 2005 Audit of the VA Information Security Program. Should this not occur, funding for the Office of the Secretary would be decreased by 10 percent for every year they are not instituted.

The Simmons-Blackburn legislation came on the heels of Simmons' letter to three of the nation's major credit reporting agencies asking for assistance. Simmons asked that the companies provide a free credit report to each of the 26.5 million veterans affected by Monday's announcement. Simmons also asked the three credit giants to offer fraud alert and credit monitoring services to those veterans who request it.

Simmons concluded, "Today's announcement from the VA is long-overdue. I've always believed that we must do more to assist those veterans who may have been adversely affected by the recent theft of data. But the VA must not stop with free credit monitoring. It must provide credit reports to each veteran and apply more stringent security procedures for handling sensitive personal data. Rest assured, I will continue to work to protect our veterans' personal information from identity theft."

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